

## Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USDEL SECRETARY PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 110560 TOSEC 110842

EXDIS

FOLLOWING TEL SENT ACTION SECSTATE, NAIROBI FROM MOSCOW  
MAY 6:

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 7105

EXDIS

NAIROBI FOR SECRETARY'S PARTY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UR, US, XF

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE RESPONSE TO SOVIET MIDDLE EAST STATEMENT

REF: (A) STATE 107449, (B) MOSCOW 7088

1. WE WELCOME THE OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT ON POSSIBLE  
MODALITIES FOR HANDLING THE SOVIET MIDDLE EAST STATEMENT  
(REF A).

2. IN OUR VIEW, THE OVERRIDING MOTIVATION FOR ISSUING THE  
DECLARATION (SO SOON AFTER A REASONABLY SIMILAR ONE ON  
JAN 10) IS CONTINUED AND PERHAPS GROWING SOVIET FRUSTRATION  
CAUSED BY MOSCOW'S INABILITY TO FIND ITS NICHE IN THE MIDDLE  
EAST NEGOTIATING PROCESS. GIVEN THEIR LIMITED CAPACITY TO  
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INFLUENCE DIRECTLY THE PARTIES INVOLVED IN THE CONFLICT,

THE SOVIETS HAVE PLACED THEIR MONEY ON THE MEPC AS THE MOST PROMISING MEANS BY WHICH TO REENTER THE NEGOTIATING GAME IN A POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT WAY. HOWEVER, THEY HAVE BEEN STYMIED BY THE IMPASSE CAUSED BY (AMONG OTHER THINGS) THE ISSUE OF PLO PARTICIPATION IN NEGOTIATIONS. SEEING THEIR "CLIENTS" DIVERTED BY THE SEEMINGLY INTRACTABLE LEBANESE CRISIS, AND FACING A LENGTHY U.S. ELECTION CAMPAIGN DURING WHICH ATTENTION WOULD BE ESSENTIALLY DIRECTED ELSEWHERE, THE SOVIETS APPEAR TO HAVE MODIFIED THEIR STANCE TO A LIMITED DEGREE IN ORDER TO TRY TO GET SOME DIPLOMATIC MOVEMENT (WHICH WOULD INCLUDE MOSCOW) UNDERWAY.

3. FROM OUR VANTAGE POINT, MOSCOW IS PROBABLY AIMING TOWARD A CONVOCATION OF SOME FORM OF U.S.-SOVIET BILATERAL CONSULTATIONS PREPARATORY TO THEIR RECENTLY ENUNCIATED "FIRST PHASE" OF A RECONVENED MEPC. THE BILATERAL CONCEPT, CONTAINED IN THE U.S. STATEMENT OF DECEMBER 1, 1975, WAS ACCEPTED BY THE SOVIETS IN THEIR DECEMBER 18 RESPONSE, AND WAS PARTICULARLY STRESSED RECENTLY BY USUALLY WELL-INFORMED ALEKSANDR KISLOV, CHIEF OF THE MIDDLE EAST SECTION AT THE USA AND CANADA INSTITUTE, DURING INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS WITH EMBOFFS. MOREOVER, ALTHOUGH AMBASSADOR SYTENKO DID NOT RAISE SPECIFICALLY THE BILATERAL ISSUE IN HIS CONVERSATION WITH ME ON MAY 4, HE STRONGLY IMPLIED THAT SOME FORM OF U.S.-USSR JOINT EFFORT WAS NEEDED IN ORDER TO AVOID FURTHER DETERIORATION OF AN ALREADY DANGEROUS SITUATION.

4. THE IMPLIED SOVIET FLEXIBILITY CONTAINED IN THE APRIL 29 STATEMENT, AND UNDERScoreD BY AMABASSADOR SYTENKO, WAS FURTHER REINFORCED BY A MAY 5 PRAVDA COMMENTARY WHICH ALSO CALLED FOR PLO PARTICIPATION IN BOTH PHASES, BUT WHICH OMITTED ANY REFERENCE TO MODALITIES (TIMING, LEVEL) OF SUCH PARTICIPATION. ON THE OTHER HAND, GROMYKO'S REPORTED COMMENTS IN PARIS (REF B) WOULD SEEM TO REFLECT LITTLE GIVE IN THE SOVIET POSITION, BUT THIS IS NOT SURPRISING GIVEN THE VENUE.

5. IN LIGHT OF THE ABOVE, SUGGEST THAT WE RESPOND TO  
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THE SOVIET STATEMENT BY CALLING FOR BILATERAL CONSULTATIONS ALONG THE LINES OF OUR DECEMBER 1 PROPOSAL IN ORDER TO DRAW THE SOVIETS OUT ON WHAT SPECIFICALLY MOSCOW HAS IN MIND. ALTHOUGH WE HAVE LITTLE EXPECTATION THAT SUCH CONSULTATIONS WOULD CONTRIBUTE SIGNIFICANTLY TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF AN OVERALL SETTLEMENT, IT SEEMS TO US FROM OUT ADMITTEDLY VERY LIMITED VANTAGE POINT THAT RENEWED DIPLOMATIC

NEGOTIATIONS MIGHT SERVE TO SOFTEN THE MORE RIGID  
POSITIONS OF SOME OF THE PARTIES INVOLVED AND TAMP  
DOWN SOMEWHAT THE POSSIBILITY OF THE SITUATION  
DETERIORATING BETWEEN ISRAEL, SYRIA, AND LEBANON.  
IN ADDITION, A REASONABLY POSITIVE RESPONSE COULD  
PARRY SOVIET PROPAGANDA AIMED AT "U.S. INTRANSIGENCE," AND  
CONCEIVABLY COULD ALSO TAKE SOME HEAT OFF  
THOSE ARAB COUNTRIES WHICH MIGHT BE RELYING ON  
U.S. LEADERSHIP TO PROVIDE DIRECTION TOWARD A MIDDLE  
EAST SETTLEMENT. FURTHERMORE, A FORTHCOMING RESPONSE,  
WHICH UNDENIABLY COULD COST US SOMETHING IN TERMS OF  
ENHANCING THE SOVIET ROLE IN THE AREA, COULD NEVER-  
THELESS PAY DIVIDENDS IN THE OVERALL BILATERAL U.S.-  
USSR RELATIONSHIP AT A TIME WHEN SUCH A DEVELOPMENT  
MIGHT BE SIGNIFICANT. STOESSEL UNQUOTE SISCO

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